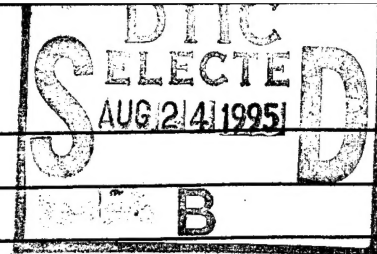


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NAVAL WAR COLLEGE
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**HALSEY AND SPRUANCE: A STUDY IN OPERATIONAL-TACTICAL
COMMAND**

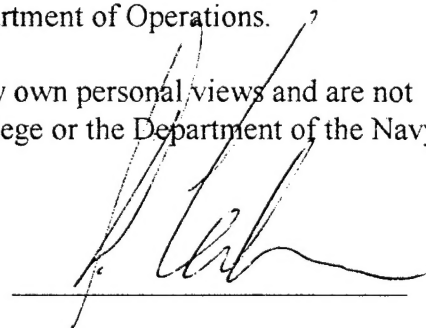
By

D.I. LEDSON

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Operations.

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ABSTRACT OF

HALSEY AND SPRUANCE: A STUDY IN OPERATIONAL-TACTICAL COMMAND

One of the most critical posts to which any military officer can aspire is that of operational commander of national joint or combined forces. It is critical because the person in that position has a very great potential to assure either the success or failure of the military forces entrusted to them. Operational commanders stand astride both the strategic and tactical levels of war. They are required to translate strategic goals and tasks into militarily achievable operational, or even strategic goals. If there is a congruence between ends and means and strategy then the operational commander must ensure that the three elements are harmonized.

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HALSEY AND SPRUANCE: A STUDY IN OPERATIONAL-TACTICAL COMMAND

INTRODUCTION

One of the most critical posts to which any military officer can aspire is that of operational commander of national joint or combined forces. It is critical because the person in that position has a very great potential to assure either the success or failure of the military forces entrusted to them. Operational commanders stand astride both the strategic and tactical levels of war. They are required to translate strategic goals and tasks into militarily achievable operational, or even strategic, goals. If there is a congruence between ends and means and strategy then the operational commander must ensure that the three elements are harmonised.

A failure to ensure that operational commanders are appropriately trained and effective will, if the past is to provide a reliable guide, be 'paid for in blood.' And, the evidence is that this has indeed been the case in the initial battles of major wars since 1776 in which US forces have been involved.¹ Inadequate training of commanders and staffs at the operational level was identified as 'the critical deficiency in these first battles...'² How then are the operational commanders of today, and tomorrow, to be prepared to execute their important responsibilities? Training at the operational level, for example using computer simulations or regular exercises involving operational commanders and staffs making operational level decisions in likely scenarios, is one important tool. Another is to encapsulate the elements of operational

¹ Major General G.R. Sullivan, USA, "Learning To Decide at the Operational Level," Military Review October 1987: p.18.

²Sullivan, p.18

art into Service doctrine. So too is formal education in 'operational art' at Service staff and war colleges. An essential ingredient in the educational process is the examination of operational commanders of the past to establish whether any lessons from 'yesterday' can be beneficially applied to 'today.'

Examining the conduct of past operational commanders may not always be of substantial value. One needs to select those to be studied with a particular focus. Some would argue, for example, that the most fertile ground for study is to look at those commanders for whom success was elusive.³ This premise, of course, begs the question of why failures teach more lessons than successes - does not success teach us what one did correctly, and failure merely what one did incorrectly? Nevertheless, it does not serve by any means to invalidate alternative approaches.

The last great campaign in which the US was involved where the USN provided operational commanders of varying qualities was the seaborne thrust across the Central Pacific during World War II. The two principal operational-tactical commanders were Admirals William F. Halsey and Raymond A. Spruance; Commanders of the Third and Fifth Fleets respectively. It is important to note that only their immediate superior, Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, who was CinC Pacific Ocean Areas and CinC Pacific Fleet, functioned at the purely operational level. In the post-war years the reputations of the two men as commanders have been generally favourable - perhaps the major difference being Halsey's categorisation as an aggressive commander and Spruance's as a cautious commander. These reputations were, however, based on essentially historical recounting of their activities by generally 'friendly' commentators. There was, and has been, little attempt to examine the two men as commanders within an operational context. Such an analysis could

³ Captain R.C. Rubel, USN, "Gettysburg and Midway: Historical Parallels in Operational Command," Naval War College Review Winter 1995: p.96.

provide useful lessons because the reality is that one, Spruance, was a successful and effective operational-tactical commander able to straddle effectively the gap between strategy and tactics, the other, Halsey, a relative failure whose feet seemed constantly to remain anchored to the tactical ground.

A further reason for examining the two men is that, despite the warranted emphasis being given to jointness, the reality is that the exercise of operational command by a naval commander embarked at sea, has critical differences from that exercised by either land or air commanders located in a rear area headquarters some distance from the battle line.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

At present there is a propensity to define the role of the operational commander in terms of 'operational leadership'. However, it is more appropriately defined as 'operational command.' 'Leadership' as a concept is in popular vogue within military circles, but it is too narrow a concept at the operational level - and, indeed, is more relevant to the tactical levels of war. It may be loosely defined as the ability to 'motivate people to do what you want them to do through the generally benign influence of the sources of power available to a leader.' But command goes beyond this. In the words of Field Marshal Sir William Slim: 'Command is that mixture of example, persuasion, and compulsion by which you get men to do what you want them to do, even if they don't want to do it themselves...Command is the projection of personality...an art...exercised by each man in his own way.'⁴ Clearly there are elements of leadership within command - but that necessary ingredient of compulsion is too understated.

⁴Field Marshal Sir William Slim, "Higher Command in War", Kermit Roosevelt Lecture, US Army Command and General Staff College

Leadership is a more appropriate concept for the levels below the operational, the tactical level where a commander's span of control is shorter, where contact between 'troops' and commander is more frequent and more intimate. The operational commander 'commands' - his subordinates 'lead'. In this regard it is relevant to note that accounts of Halsey are peppered throughout with statements such as 'his high qualities as a fighter and leader', 'he was a great combat leader' and he was 'revered by the enlisted men of his fleet.'⁵ No such comments are found on Spruance. Nevertheless, while Halsey may have been the superior leader, in the traditional and now popular "warrior" sense, Spruance was undoubtedly the superior commander in that for the operational commander those he must most importantly impress with his qualities are his immediate subordinates and his superiors. For example, although Halsey was 'loved dearly' by his men, he did not enjoy 'the keen professional respect of (his) captains and admirals that Spruance...did.'⁶

Furthermore, too much of a focus on leadership obscures the principal requirement of the operational commander. This is to have the facility for 'operational vision.' To see the interconnectivities between strategy and tactical actions; to see apparently disparate tactical actions in an operational context. Also important is the ability to operationally shape the theatre of operations to assure the best chance of success with available forces against those forces expected to be encountered. The facility to shape the theatre or area of operations in a form consistent with 'his 'vision' is arguably the most critical function of the operational commander. . But, the tasks involved in operational command go beyond planning. The operational commander is also responsible for the execution of the operational plan - and often, concurrently

⁵ E.B. Potter, Nimitz (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 1976) p.215; Thomas B. Buell, The Quiet Warrior: A Biography of Admiral Raymond A. Spruance (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 1987) p.203; Potter, p.352

⁶ C.G. Reynolds, The Fast Carriers (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 1992) p.258.

with the planning for future major operations or campaigns. Consequently, qualities beyond those required by a narrow definition of 'leadership' are essential in an operational commander.

Qualities of Command

The qualities which Field Marshal Slim believes are required in an operational commander are willpower(determination), judgement, flexibility of mind, knowledge and integrity. As he points out some of these may well contradict others - for example if willpower becomes stubbornness, then flexibility of mind is substantially reduced. Clausewitz, too, makes this critical point that what is essential is 'a harmonious combination of elements.'⁷

Determination is an important quality because quite often it is the essential ingredient which allows the operational commander to prevail in the face of the massive stresses which are inevitable in the face of his critical responsibilities. Without determination, based on a sound moral courage, a belief in the rightness and importance of one's cause, operational commanders would find it very difficult to carry on their responsibilities over the long periods expected at the operational level.

Sound judgement is a critical quality in the operational commander. It directly affects how his immediate subordinates act - but, even more importantly, it is a vital factor in defining the relationship between the operational commander and his superiors; how ones judgement is regarded determines to a very large extent the trust which one is given.

⁷ C. Von Clausewitz, On War (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton, 1984) p.100.

Field Marshal Slim makes the point that during modern wars tactics and technology can change rapidly. Changes may have to be made too because of changes in weather, strategy, objectives and the like. War is a complex business - subjected to everchanging fog and friction. An operational commander must have a mind sufficiently flexible to cope with a dynamic environment, to seize the opportunities provided by new technologies, to learn from past experiences and recent battles, to change plans when circumstances so dictate. Clearly, however, flexibility of mind is a finely balanced quality. At one extreme, a too flexible commander may constantly change his mind - at the other he descends to stubbornness. The quality of flexibility of mind displays itself most critically during the planning and execution of a major operation or campaign.

Closely related to flexibility of mind and judgement, and perhaps a key determinant of how well balanced it is, is intellect; the capacity to reason and understand. It provides the basis on which decisions can be made and plans changed in a logical and rational manner. A keen intellect is an important ingredient in the 'clay' which forms the operational commander; it may well be the substance which holds the form together. Clausewitz stresses the importance of intellect in his discussion on military genius. 'If we then ask what sort of mind is likeliest to display the qualities of military genius, experience and observation will both tell us that it is the inquiring rather than the creative mind, the comprehensive rather than the specialized approach, the calm rather than the excitable head to which in war we would choose to entrust the fate of our brothers and children, and the safety and honor of our country.'⁸

On the other hand, however, Clausewitz was also a proponent of boldness and daring and the commander's intuition. Conversely, Sun Tzu puts a greater emphasis

⁸Clausewitz, p.112

on the need to make rational and calculated decisions. Commanders '...who react without reflection, who are courageous but lose control too easily, can be manipulated by the enemy. Courage alone is not enough.'⁹

Relationship With Superiors and Subordinates

In addition to the operational commander, Field Marshal Slim identifies two other elements of command; the staff and the way in which the commander keeps in contact with the people who are commanded. While he essentially addresses the requirements of a land forces commander there are some general principles which are relevant in all warfare environments. In Slim's opinion staffs should be smaller rather than larger, and they have an important responsibility in providing the commander with information on the theatre of operations and suggestions on various courses of action. Staffs should also constantly bear in mind that they serve the fighting forces. In this regard one of their most important tasks is conveying to them the will of the commander. The importance which operational commanders should pay to selecting their staffs is also a critical point made by Slim.

While contact with the fighting forces is an important element, it is probably less important in the maritime environment than it is in the land; and less so for the operational commander than the tactical leader. A far more critical element, and one not identified by Slim, is the superior commander. A study of the Pacific and recent wars illustrates clearly the decisive influence the theatre-strategic commander exerts on the operational commander. After all, it is this commander who defines the strategic objective, who determines to a large extent the resources and constraints with which the operational commander will be required to operate, and, importantly,

⁹ Michael I. Handel, Masters of War: Sun Tzu, Clausewitz and Jomini (Portland, Oregon: Frank Cass, 1992) pp.140-141.

can provide the officers the operational commander wants on his staff and as his component commanders.

Command in the Naval Environment

Operational command in the naval environment subjects the commander to factors to which operational commanders in other environments are not exposed. Firstly, the time and space factors are significantly different from the air and ground environments. The operational commander embarked in a ship can expect to be at sea for weeks and even months, subject to the vicissitudes of weather and with his command platform engaged directly in combat. This latter factor means that often naval operational commanders must be overwhelmed by the urge to get involved in tactical decision making; the superior commander will resist the temptation, the average or inferior commander will succumb. While the ground commander must master terrain, at sea the vast distances, the relatively slow speed of surface ships and the dramatic effect of weather are the critical elements which must be mastered. Ships at sea are expected to continue operating and to remain at sea in all conditions of weather. A failure to master the elements can result in substantial personnel and materiel losses. Additionally, commanders must be prepared to modify operational plans should the weather militate against achieving original intentions.

HALSEY AND SPRUANCE

At the outset it must be noted that during the Pacific war neither Halsey nor Spruance was a young man; Halsey was in his early 60's, Spruance in his late fifties. Halsey graduated from the Naval Academy in 1904 and qualified as an aviator in 1934 at the age of 52. Spruance was a non-aviator whose background was principally

in battleships. He graduated from the Academy in 1907. Halsey was a gregarious man who loved a good party, particularly if young people were present, and would sometimes indulge himself into the early morning hour; and still rise at 6am.¹⁰ He was impetuous and passionate - and nicknamed 'Bull' for good reasons. Personal publicity also seemed to hold a special appeal for him. Spruance was different. While he was not adverse to company, he preferred quiet evenings relaxing to classical music and enjoyed a long uninterrupted night's sleep; both at sea and ashore - during peace and war. He avoided publicity because, in his opinion, '... man's judgement is best when he can forget himself and any reputation he may have acquired, and can concentrate wholly on making the right decisions.'¹¹

Determination

Halsey and Spruance were both determined men - but in different ways. They were determined to defeat the Japanese, but with Halsey there is a sense that it became a personal vendetta; he did indeed hate and despise the Japanese personally. Spruance, however, appears to have been more resolute. For him, hatred was an emotion that could interfere with rational thought.¹² Surprisingly, though there was not the same determination when dealing with their subordinate commanders. Spruance, in particular, disliked personal confrontations and avoided having to settle the passionate differences between Admiral R. Kelly Turner and General Holland M.

¹⁰ W.F. Halsey and J.Bryan III, Admiral Halsey's Story (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1947) p. xiii.

¹¹ E.P. Forrestel, Admiral Raymond A. Spruance (Washington, DC: Department of The Navy, 1966) p.62.

¹² T.B.Buell, The Quiet Warrior (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 1987) p.226.

Smith over command of amphibious forces.¹³ Nevertheless, should his explicit operational requirements not be met, he was quick to take action.

Perhaps the most obvious evidence of their determination, and the one which is their most meritorious, is that, despite their ages, they remained in the Pacific theatre for the duration of the war. This required long periods at sea, on occasions under adverse and debilitating weather conditions, and often with their flagships directly involved in combat with Japanese forces. The prolonged exposure of Halsey and Spruance to combat, that is, tactical engagements, is in stark contrast to the experiences of ground and air commanders.

Judgement

The evidence is that very few, if any questions were raised by either Nimitz or Admiral Ernest J. King about Spruance's judgement. While his caution may have been queried, this is a separate and different matter. Halsey's judgement was, however, increasingly questioned throughout the war. Initially, he was able to remain relatively unscathed because Nimitz and King placed at least some of the blame on his first chief of staff, Captain Miles Browning.¹⁴ His press conferences and public invective against the Japanese served to raise further questions about the soundness of his judgement. Matters were rapidly coming to a head as the war ended - principally due to Halsey's failures during the typhoons of December 1944 and June 1945. In the latter case Halsey's career was saved by Admiral John S. McCain being made to bear the principal blame - but he had run out of scapegoats for Nimitz and King to blame.

¹³Buell, p.p195-196

¹⁴ E.B. Potter, Bull Halsey (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 1985) p.243.

An operational commander's judgement is closely related to his attitude to 'risk taking' - to taking a gamble. Spruance was risk averse and cautious, Halsey was not. On occasions Halsey's willingness to take risks worked in his favour. But on balance, it ended up more often by bringing his judgement into question. 'Boldness, daring and risk-taking defy rational analysis and transcend any rules, which is what makes them so unpredictable and difficult to counter...This does not guarantee that risk-taking will always be rewarded or, conversely, that caution is invariably the better choice...The secret of success for the creative military genius lies in knowing when to break the rules of war and when to heed them.'¹⁵ Spruance never broke 'the rules of war' because of his caution and his nature - and because he was not a military genius. Halsey broke them because he was impulsive, impetuous and because it was his nature.

Flexibility of Mind

It is not altogether clear who of Halsey and Spruance had the best balance between flexibility and inflexibility. On balance, however, it was probably Spruance. Too often Halsey seems to have become fixated on one objective to the exclusion of others. In both typhoons he experienced he put his commitments to General Douglas MacArthur, in December, and General Simon B. Buckner, in June, ahead of the realities of the weather conditions he was experienced.¹⁶ It may have been that '...the war simply became too complicated for Halsey.'¹⁷ While the war may never have become too complicated for Spruance, there is evidence that he never fully understood the impact that the fast carriers had on war at sea. For example, with regard to the Battle of the Philippine Sea, 'What Admiral Spruance did not seem to

¹⁵Handel, p.9

¹⁶Potter, p.321 and p.337

¹⁷ C.G. Reynolds, The Fast Carriers (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 1992) p.387.

understand about carriers was that enemy ships could not run around a fast carrier task force.¹⁸ But, as he rarely took tactical control of them, this shortcoming was perhaps not as critical as it would otherwise have been; that is, had he functioned more as a tactical commander than an operational commander. It can be argued, however, that 'Spruance exercised tactical command over the fast carriers only twice - holding Pownall to the beaches in the Gilberts and doing the same to Mitscher at Saipan, and both actions resulted in the misuse of carriers.'¹⁹ Be that as it may, on neither occasion was Spruance defeated by the Japanese. In any event, that his battleship background disadvantaged him in regard to the employment of carriers was largely offset by the role played by Admiral John H. Towers on Admiral Nimitz's staff in developing carrier/aviation doctrine. Spruance's employment of his forces in the Philippine Sea in a similar manner to that he had used at Midway, despite the significantly different circumstances, may also be indicative of a certain inflexibility of mind.

Intellect

Spruance undoubtedly had a superior intellect to that of Halsey. There are a number of illustrations which support this premise. Firstly, he was able to cope with the complexities of major amphibious operations; Halsey either could not or would not. For example, '...after hauling down his flag on 26 January 1945 he concerned himself primarily with plans for covering amphibious operations with the carriers rather than their amphibious aspects, which was left to keener minds.'²⁰ Furthermore, '...his brother officers knew him professionally as an able commander, not brilliant but solid...'²¹ This evidence is not used to suggest that Halsey was an unintelligent

¹⁸Reynolds, p.181

¹⁹Ibid, p.386

²⁰Reynolds, p.299

²¹Halsey, p.xiv

man. Rather, it is used to support two conclusions; first, that of the two men, Spruance's intellect was the superior - and second, that Halsey's intellect was such that it was inadequate to support him operating at the operational level of command in the complex theatre in which he found himself being required to operate.

There are some possible reasons why Spruance had the superior intellect. Firstly, it seems that Halsey had no interests outside the Navy - nor was he particularly inquisitive across a wide range of subjects. Spruance, on the other hand, was widely read and a firm believer in keeping himself up to date across a broad range of issues. Secondly, Spruance had three tours of duty at the Naval War College between 1926 and 1938; one of which he spent on the staff. In contrast, Halsey attended the junior course at the War College when he was 50 years of age. Thirdly, and perhaps the most compelling evidence, is that by most accounts Spruance thought about the very qualities and tasks required of an operational commander and intellectually rationalised them. Halsey, on the other hand, seems to have devoted his thoughts principally to the tactical level - engaging the enemy in combat; but that, after all, was part of his nature - he was a fighter by a considerably larger margin than he was a thinker, a combat leader rather than an operational commander.

COMMAND RELATIONSHIPS

While the operational commander is, himself, the central element of the conduct of major operations at the operational level, he does not operate in a vacuum. He must, of necessity, interact with those immediately below him, (his staff and his component commanders), and those immediately above him. To a very large extent how effective these inter-relationships, and, indeed, inter-dependencies, are, depends on those command qualities he possesses.

Relationship With Superior Commander

In the Pacific theatre all of the superior commanders were personal acquaintances - and even close friends. This is an important factor in that it meant that to a large extent each understood the strengths and weaknesses of each other - and they were able to communicate honestly and frankly. But such familiarity can be a double edged sword in that failures to perform can be forgiven for too long. It is possible that had the war proceeded much longer that Halsey would have been relieved of command, perhaps by Towers or Mitscher, and returned to a post in the United States. Despite what Nimitz may have said publicly of Halsey, 'He has that rare combination of intellectual capacity and military audacity, and can calculate to a cat's whisker the risk involved', both he and King had far greater confidence in Spruance as an operational commander.²² And, to a very large extent, this confidence and trust turned on the differences in the personal qualities of the two men - and principally their judgement. Although Nimitz was happy enough to relieve Admiral Robert L. Ghormley with Halsey as Commander of the South Pacific Area and Force this was to Nimitz, and King, the secondary theatre of operations for US naval forces. It was Spruance who was entrusted with the amphibious operations critical to the drive across the central Pacific. 'Admiral Halsey was not a Fleet commander in the same sense as Spruance, employing amphibious forces and escort carriers as well as battle forces...Bull Halsey was a carrier task force commander and nothing else...'²³ A truer indication of Nimitz's regard of Halsey is perhaps illustrated by Nimitz's action when he was hospitalised with malaria: '...he ordered his flag kept flying at CinCPac headquarters. He feared that if the fact he was ill became generally known, somebody would pass the word to the South Pacific, and the unpredictable Halsey, the

²² E.B. Potter, Nimitz (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 1976) pp.206-207.

²³ Reynolds, pp.281 and 299

only other four-star American admiral in the Pacific, might conceivably exercise the prerogative of his seniority and declare himself temporary Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet and Pacific Ocean Areas. The result could be chaos.²⁴ Further, with regard to Spruance having to relieve Halsey for Midway and Nimitz's reaction: 'With stakes so high and available U.S. strength so limited, Halsey's impulsive boldness may have invited disaster. In the impending battle, what was needed was not so much bellicosity as the ability to calculate coolly under stress. Nimitz believed the intellectual Spruance had just that ability.'²⁵

Despite his superior command responsibilities, Spruance in his relationship with Nimitz, had the added advantage of having served as his chief of staff. The two men, therefore, knew each other well, were comfortable together, had similar ascetic interests, and thought alike. Notwithstanding Nimitz's high regard for Halsey, it was based more on his abilities to fight and inspire those below him, and perhaps, too, an appreciation of his contributions during the early stages of the Pacific war than on his abilities as a thinker or as an operational commander.

Relations With The Staff

The principal function of Halsey's and Spruance's staff was to provide support in the planning and execution of major operations and campaigns. Spruance was a meticulous and detailed planner - who saw his plans within an operational context. He was well aware of the need for flexibility once the enemy engaged and so of the importance of subordinate commanders knowing how they fitted into the operation so that they would be able to use their initiative. Halsey was a very poor planner. He relied on ad hoc decisions, intuition and 'on the spot' decisions. This may have kept

²⁴Ibid, p.220

²⁵Ibid, p.84

the enemy guessing - but so to did it his own commanders. The opinion of one officer was '... one of confidence when Spruance was there and one of concern when Halsey was there...When you moved into Admiral Spruance's command from Admiral Halsey's...you moved from an area in which you never knew what you were going to do in the next five minutes or how you were going to do it, because the printed instructions were never up to date...He never did things the same way twice. When you moved into Admiral Spruance's command, the printed instructions were up to date, and you did things in accordance with them.'²⁶

Spruance chose his staff to complement his capabilities; and to offset his shortcomings. He was well served by his Chief of Staff, Captain Charles J. Moore - who may well have been a far more brilliant planner than he is given credit for being. In any event for Spruance it was Moore who 'carried out the 'the complicated, tedious translation of his decisions and ideas into intricate written plans (which) was a chore he disliked and could not do well.'²⁷ Halsey, on the other hand, selected chiefs of staff who were similar to him in temperament - volatile and impetuous. But he was fiercely loyal to his staff - Browning was given command of carrier as a result of Halsey's refusal to let him be relieved; although Browning was relieved from that command. Spruance, however, did not seem to pursue Moore's interests with determination and he was not promoted to flag rank during the war. Moore complained of Spruance, 'in the presence of rank I am ignored, which is as it should be, I suppose. He'll chat for hours with a visiting friend when he knows I need only a minute of his time to get ahead with my work.'²⁸

²⁶ E.B. Potter, Nimitz (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 1976) p.352.

²⁷Buell, p.183

²⁸Buell, p.213

Neither Spruance nor Halsey had a well balanced staff in terms of the balance of aviators and non-aviators; although in the later stages of the war this was changed on the orders of King and Nimitz. But in the Pacific where the carriers were pre-eminent this appears to have worked to Spruance's general advantage. Because he, and his key staff, were unfamiliar with carriers he was prepared to delegate considerable lee way to Admiral Marc A. Mitscher who proved to be a brilliant commander of carriers. Nevertheless, the willingness to trust subordinate commanders was dependent on them performing satisfactorily. With his lack of carrier expertise Spruance was not always well placed to make a judgement on this. For example, he 'had seen no fault during Pownall's actions during the Gilberts campaign and could not understand why Pownall was being considered for relief.'²⁹ Halsey, being an aviator, was not prepared to delegate to the same extent, and was a reflection of the fact that he saw himself as the fast carrier commander. 'This attitude was dangerous, for Halsey lacked the experience of Mitscher and other admirals...and...nor did he have a suitable staff for fast carrier task force operations.'³⁰ Although Halsey's staff may not have been suitable, he appears to have favoured far larger staffs than did Spruance.³¹ Spruance's view was that staffs 'should be composed of the smallest number of first class men who can do the job.'³²

CONCLUSIONS

A study of Halsey and Spruance during the Pacific campaigns allows some conclusions to be drawn about operational command which are just as relevant today as they were then. This without studying a great detail the major operations in which

²⁹Reynolds, p.122

³⁰Reynolds, p.257

³¹Buell, p.193

³²Forrestel, p.70

each man was involved - but rather by looking at the qualities and elements of command at the operational level and within an operational context.

Spruance was an undeniably more effective operational-tactical commander than was Halsey. Indeed it is arguable whether Halsey managed to lift himself above the tactical level. There are many reasons for the different performance of the two men. Each possessed the necessary qualities of command - but in Spruance, they were more 'in harmony' and the critical two, judgement and intellect were more finely honed. This was a factor of the different nature of each man, Halsey ebullient and impulsive, Spruance reserved and calculating, and to Spruance's wider intellectual interests and Halsey's very narrow focus on purely Naval matters. The relatively long time spent by Spruance at the Naval War College may have been an important factor. Irrespective of the reason, the qualities of judgement and intellect were an important factor in their relationship with Admirals Nimitz and King. Both men had greater trust and confidence in Spruance than did they in Halsey.

Neither Halsey nor Spruance was a military genius - nor could they be categorised as 'brilliant' across the array of command skills. But Spruance was well aware of his shortcomings and he selected a staff which complemented him. Halsey, on the other hand, seems to have been unaware of his shortcomings - he selected chiefs of staff of a similar volatile and impetuous temperament. Spruance's staff may very well have made his reputation - Halsey's diminished his. The fundamental difference between the two men was that Halsey was a 'fighter' who allowed himself to be seduced by tactical engagements and the lure of a decisive battle in the Mahanian sense. Spruance was far more the fighter than the thinker - tactics occasionally exerted their allure but he was more often able to grasp the operational vision.

LESSONS LEARNED

- . In training the operational commanders of today and tomorrow the study of operational commanders in the past provides a valuable tool. For lessons to be learned this study can profitably look at the qualities and elements of command as well as the actual conduct of campaigns and major operations.
- . The emphasis on 'jointness' should not ignore the unique demands of the different warfare environments on operational commanders.
- . An operational commander need not be a 'military genius' to be successful.
- . At the operational level the concept of command is more important than the concept of leadership.
- . The qualities required of operational commanders are different than those required of tactical leaders. While risk taking may be acceptable at the tactical level, it has to be leavened by a far greater degree of 'judgement' at the operational.
- . Success at the tactical level is no guarantee of success at the operational level. At the tactical level the emphasis is on fighting - at the operational it is on being able to formulate and hold on to an 'operational vision.'
- . The relationship between an operational commander and his immediate superior is the most critical relationship he has. Personal relationships at this level are especially important.

- . An operational commander must be prepared to delegate tactical control to his subordinate commanders. The extent to which he does that depends on his trust in them, which comes from working together, and in the efficacy of his own plans, which comes from seeing them successfully executed.
- . Of the qualities required of the operational commander intellect and judgement are the most important. Service War and Staff colleges play a critical role in developing these attributes.
- . The staff makes a critical contribution to the performance of the operational commander. He must be aware of his own strengths and weakness and select staffs to balance these.
- . It is more important that an operational commander be aware of the capabilities of his force than he is of their tactical employment.

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